NSGO Implementation Plan
For Summary Recommendations
of the Sea Grant National Communications Task Force

NOAA's National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) is pleased to present the Implementation Plan for the Sea Grant Communications Review Task Force report "Communicating for Success" (http://www.seagrant.noaa.gov/other/greenbook_doc/communicating_for_success.pdf). The Report presented findings in three areas: the National Sea Grant Library, the *Sea Grant Abstracts*, and the National Media Relations Program. The final document was informed by two Technical Panels that conducted a review of the three national communications activities funded by Sea Grant. One panel reviewed the National Sea Grant Library and the *Sea Grant Abstracts* while the other panel reviewed the National Media Relations Program.

The NSGO is grateful to the Task Force, led by Ms. Robin Alden and assisted by Mr. Jeff Stephan and Ms. Amy Broussard, for their leadership in reviewing the three national communications activities. The implementation of the report's recommendations as detailed below will increase the visibility and utility of Communications within the Sea Grant network and improve the management, structure, and efficiency of the three national communications projects.

General Recommendations
1. The Task Force recommends that the Sea Grant Network institutionalize a process for periodic updating and modification of the 2002 National Communications Plan "Positioning Sea Grant: An Integrated National Communications Plan 2003-2006."

Response: The "Positioning Sea Grant" (Wittman) Plan is a stand-alone document that reflects the work of a specific group commissioned for a specific purpose. While the goal of the Plan is not time sensitive and remains applicable to Sea Grant both now and into the future, the NSGO recognizes the need for a recurring process for periodic updating and modification of the document. As a result, the Plan will be formally revisited in 2006, and periodically thereafter, in order to assess progress in the implementation of its recommendations.

It is important to note however, that the specific goal of the Plan is "To effectively demonstrate the need for and value of the National Sea Grant College Program to Congress, NOAA, the Department of Commerce, OMB, the White House, national NGOs, national news media, and other relevant partners and audiences." Currently, numerous activities seek to position Sea Grant as a leader "within the beltway" in the areas of marine, coastal and Great Lakes management. Within NOAA, efforts are underway to increase visibility of Sea Grant, for example, the Beltway Brown Bag seminar series, a special provision for NOAA to recognize Sea Grant media clips as NOAA efforts, the new National Sea Grant web site, a forthcoming Kiplinger style network and constituent newsletter, a substantial rise in Sea Grant activity receiving recognition in the VADM's reports, and others.

The Plan also currently serves as the foundation for the National Sea Grant Office Communications Team work plans, which are updated annually according to relevant Sea Grant priorities. The Plan will also serve as the foundation for the Media Relations

Position work plan, also updated annually.

2. The Task Force recommends that the National Sea Grant Office designate one person to be responsible for effective national communications.

Response: The NSGO Communications Program Leader will fill the role and will also serve as the federal manager for the NSGL and NMRO. As the designated person responsible for effective national communications, the NSGO Communications Program Leader will work with the NSGO Communications Team, the Media Relations position and the Sea Grant Communications Network to "effectively demonstrate the need for and value of the National Sea Grant College Program" to decision makers and other stakeholders ("Positioning Sea Grant" Report, Goal, page 4). Projects will include coordinating timely issues and news events with the Media Relations director and the network.

3. The Task Force recommends that continued priority be given to using the one percent money in the Sea Grant budget to fund the National Sea Grant Library and the National Media Relations Program.

Response: The Communications Task Force was assembled and given the charge to address fiscal efficiency for the three national communications projects and to provide alternate funding recommendations for each. Both the NSGL and the NMRO are currently funded from a legislatively constrained 1% pool of appropriated funds that does not require matching funds. These funds are designated for network program development and rapid response projects.

In FY05, funding for the NSGL continues from the 1% pool. In the future, in order to be funded outside of the 1% pool, the NSGL and NMRO must provide matching funds. Without compromising the integrity of the NSGL and the NMRO, the NSGO Communications Team will explore alternate funding sources to the 1% pool. (For example, non-federal funds from the Pell Library or other in-kind contributions such as hosting the NMRO may be used as matching funds for the two projects.) (see recommendation #11)

4. The Task Force recommends regular outside review of both the National Sea Grant Library and the National Media Relations Program.

Response: The NSGL is subject to an external review every grant cycle and is also required to submit an annual report to the NSGO. In addition, the NSGO agrees that periodic review by a Topical Advisory Team, or equivalent thereof, is necessary.

The Media Relations Coordinator's performance will be evaluated according to the goals, objectives and duties outlined in the position work plan. The NSGO Communications Program Leader and the host will conduct this review on an annual basis. In addition, a NMRO advisory committee will have input into this process. (see recommendations #2 and #21)

5. The Task Force recommends that the Sea Grant Association's national communications activities be closely coordinated with the network's national communications program.

Response: Yes. The NSGO will work with the SGA President to ensure regularly

scheduled meetings among the SGA, NSGO, and the NMRO. As an initial step to coordinate SGA and NSGO efforts, effective in 2005, the NSGO Communications Program Leader and the SGA External Affairs Director meet on a monthly basis. The next, more critical step is for the Communications network as a whole to enable increased participation of the SGA liaison in the Communications Steering Committee to better equip the liaison to coordinate Communications network activities with the SGA.

Sea Grant Abstracts and National Sea Grant Library Recommendations
6. The Task Force recommends cessation of the publication **Sea Grant Abstracts**.
Response: In FY05**, Sea Grant Abstracts** will cease publication. Funding has been awarded to the Sea Grant Abstracts for only six months ($45K) through the South Carolina program. Dr. Baird and Mr. DeVoe have formally informed Sea Grant Abstracts of the decision to terminate the program. All scheduled quarterly publications of **Sea Grant Abstracts** will be required until the final termination date.   Sea Grant Abstracts will notify members on its mailing list of the termination and provide a final updated mailing list of recipients to the Sea Grant Library. The NSGL will provide interested formal subscribers with a copy of the NSGL Acquisitions Report, which includes a listing of new Sea Grant acquisitions, publications, gray literature, etc.

7. The Task Force recommends that the Communications Steering Committee, aided by the National Sea Grant Office national communications leader, develop and implement a transition plan for publicizing the Sea Grant Network's products after the cessation of the publication **Sea Grant Abstracts**.
Response: At the time of review, the NSGL typed the abstracts and placed them on disks for **Sea Grant Abstracts** to print. Those abstracts will remain with the corresponding publication once the publication of **Sea Grant Abstracts** ends. The NSGL will use the scientifically published abstract for all new scientific holdings and will not create a separate abstract. When NSGL sends out acquisition reports with new holding information (see recommendation #6), the abstract will be included. Any non-scientific publication (e.g. bookmarks, posters, etc.) will not have an abstract.

8. The Task Force recommends that the National Sea Grant Office national communications leader and the Chair of the Communications Steering Committee lead a re-examination of the network's projected needs for national communications products.
Response: A question regarding the top priorities for national communications products was included in a communications survey circulated to the Sea Grant Communications Network in January 2005. Results have been compiled and shared with the network, and will be used to establish priorities for new products.

9. The Task Force finds that the National Sea Grant Library provides an invaluable service to Sea Grant and to the users of Sea Grant information.
Response: No action required.

10. The Task Force recommends that National Sea Grant Office national communications leader provide the National Sea Grant Library with a point of

contact, advocacy and integration into the overall activities of the national communications program.

Response: The NSGO Communications Program Leader is the project officer for the NSGL. As the project officer, the NSGO Communications Program Leader will be the federal point of contact for the NSGL and will ensure the National Sea Grant Network is aware of the Library's activities. The NSGO will also explore new means of promoting usage of the NSGL.

It is also important that the NSGL actively promote the work of the National Sea Grant College Program. For example, the NSGL should build its electronic mailing list in order to promote Sea Grant publications to a diverse and growing audience. Given its location on the URI campus, the NSGL could more actively promote Sea Grant offerings within the URI community and broader library community. In addition, the NSGO also supports the Technical Panel's recommendations (Technical Review Panel Report, Appendix D) that the NSGL employees should more actively pursue professional development opportunities, build visibility among the K-12 clientele, enhance search engine optimization, and strive to enhance visibility in professional society journals and websites so that the larger scientific community may benefit from Sea Grant information.

11. The Task Force recommends that attention be given to the 1) management structure and 2) positioning of the National Sea Grant Library within the University of Rhode Island library system.

Response: In order to align themselves with the Pell library and its resources, the NSGL should consider non-federal funds from the Pell library or other in-kind contributions as possible sources of matching funds (see recommendation #3). The NSGL will also be expected to work more closely with the URI Libraries to integrate itself into "facets of the URI Library structure" (Technical Review Panel Report, Appendix D).

With regard to the NSGL management structure and position within the URI Library system, the NSGO has assigned a federal project officer, for the long-term, to the NSGL (see recommendation #10). In addition, the NSGO will conduct a management audit (or mechanism similar to a TAT if appropriate) detailing the NSGO's and the network's return on investment for $210K per year.

For example:
- Resource allocation and constraints
- Management priorities
- Possible integration of multiple national network websites (e.g. NSGL upgrade, interaction with NIMS, SGNIS, etc.)
- Need for a physical presence and resources in the long term
- Utilization and benefits of Pell Library/URI Library System resources
- Ability of Pell Library to utilize and promote NSGL
- NSGL's role in the URI Library System (e.g. do NSGL professionals serve on URI Library committees?)

Note: NSGL could be encouraged to work with URI business school students to perform this analysis.

12. The Task Force recommends that a National Sea Grant Library Advisory
    Committee be formed.
Response: A small Committee will be formed. It may include an individual from a
NOAA Library, an individual from the Pell Library, a marketing expert, an information
technology expert, Chair of the Sea Grant Communications network (or designee) and
the NSGO Communications Program Leader (*ex-officio*).

13. The Task Force recommends that the membership of the Communications Steering
    Committee should be expanded to include the National Sea Grant Library Manager.
Response: This is completed. The Communications Steering Committee has voted to
accept this recommendation and the bylaws have been rewritten accordingly.

14. The Task Force recommends that National Sea Grant Library staffing be increased
    both for fulltime employees and for contracted services as needed to meet the
    additional responsibilities that result from cessation of the publication **Sea Grant
    Abstracts.**
Response: Per the response to recommendations six and seven, initially there will be no
significant responsibilities that would necessitate additional staff. The Technical
Review Panel cites, "without the need for keyboarding abstracts and
packaging/shipping hardcopy publications to WHDB (the Abstracts), there will be
significant savings in time at NSGL." The Technical Panel also offers many
suggestions for streamlining NSGL activities. The NSGL will be responsible for
familiarizing itself with the recommendations of the Technical Review Panel (Appendix
D) particularly with regard to the ASFA database and indexing. The NSGO expects
that many of these recommendations would be implemented in the near-term and will
increase efficiency.

The NSGL's requirements and needs assessments will be presented before the FY06
NSGL grant proposal is submitted, due December 2005. That proposal will undergo
external peer review by appropriate library professionals and Sea Grant
Communications leaders.

15. The Task Force recommends that the Sea Grant Network put a high priority on
    complete and timely submissions to the National Sea Grant Library so that its
    collection reflects the comprehensive products of the National Sea Grant College
    Program.
Response: The NSGL will route a request for publications through the
Communications Steering Committee, of which the head of the NSGL is a member, and
the SGA (via Communications chair and SGA liaison). The NSGL will work with the
NSGO Communications Program Leader to track submissions. The NSGL should also
work with each Sea Grant program to ensure that network publications are submitted.
The PAT Manual will be updated to include a suggestion that the PAT may consider if
program publications are being sent to the NSGL in a timely manner. The NSGO will
also remind the Sea Grant Network to send publications to the NSGL in electronic
format.

16. The Task Force recommends that an upgrade of the National Sea Grant Library

website be given a high priority.

Response: This should be a priority and should be reflected in the NSGL proposal for FY06. In addition, programs will be required to enter publication information as part of every project in the NSGO's National Information Management System (NIMS). NIMS will recognize publications and upload them directly from the Library holdings data.

17. The Task Force recommends that a technology audit be undertaken of all National Sea Grant Library computers, peripheral equipment and software and that a high priority be given to implementing necessary technology upgrades.

Response: As part of the FY06 proposal preparation, the NSGL should prepare specific requirements and a clearly defined needs assessment for any technology or equipment required.

National Media Relations Program Recommendations

18. The Task Force concurs with the Technical Panel's recommendation that a media relations function for the National Sea Grant College Program is important.

Response: No action required.

19. The Task Force recommends that a National Media Relations Program to serve the National Sea Grant College Program be re-established at the earliest possible moment.

Response: The SGA initiated an interim NMRO position beginning in February 2005. The recruitment for a permanent NMRO director is expected to commence in October 2005, at the start of FY 06.

20. The Task Force recommends that the National Media Relations Program be located in the office of a non-governmental organization in the metropolitan Washington, DC area.

Response: The individual in the role of the NMRO director will most likely be located at a host NGO. Ultimate responsibility for the NMRO position will rest with NSGO and the host NGO, to the extent that the governing cooperative agreement allows. (see recommendations #21 and #22)

21. The Task Force recommends that a National Media Relations Advisory Committee be re-established.
22. The Task Force recommends that responsibility for the National Media Relations Program be shared by the National Media Relations Director, the National Sea Grant Office, the host nongovernmental organization and the National Media Relations Advisory Committee.

Response: The success of the National Media Relations Office Program will be the shared responsibility of the Media Relations director, the NMRO host (NGO), and the NSGO. Under a cooperative agreement, which allows "substantial" federal involvement, the NMRO host and the NSGO Communications Program Leader will work together to oversee and direct the NMRO work plan. A cooperative agreement and an MOA will outline the roles and responsibilities of the host and NSGO respectively. A small advisory committee(s), with representation throughout the Sea

Grant network and beyond, will be established by the host to provide advice on policy, programmatic priorities and direction. The NSGO Communications Program Leader and the host will facilitate the advisory committees' input on how the NMRO can best meet the needs of the network and help to identify the goals, objectives and responsibilities laid out for the National Media Relations Office. The work plan will include clear output expectations and milestones (e.g. one press conference/quarter). (see recommendation #20)

23. The Task Force recommends that a National Media Relations Director and an Administrative Assistant be hired for the National Media Relations Program.
Response: A media specialist will be hired to fill the National Media Relations Director position. The host will provide administrative assistance.